



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO MEDIA ADVISORY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FREEDOM WRITER TO SPEAK TO JUVENILE DRUG COURT GRADS

Movie "Freedom Writers" Starring Hilary Swank is Based on Woman Who Speaks to Youth

WHAT: Maria Reyes, a "real life" freedom writer from the current movie "Freedom Writers," will speak to former teen substance abusers and juvenile court graduates about her personal experience as one of the students of teacher Erin Gruwell. "Freedom Writers" is about a class of left-behind kids nobody cared about or believed in -- who, in working together, overcame the negative expectations of a school system that had given up on them. The real students -- who called themselves the Freedom Writers after they started journaling events in their lives -- had their real-life stories from their journals published in a book, and now writer/director Richard LaGravenese and Hilary Swank have brought their tale to the big screen. Reyes will speak to local San Diego graduates who will be recognized for successfully completing an intensive nine-month substance abuse treatment program. Juvenile Drug Court began in 1998 as a collaborative effort of local agencies focusing on intensive substance abuse treatment, probation supervision, counseling and frequent court appearances. The Court provides incentives for those who stay clean from alcohol and other drugs, attend school and obey the law. The Court can also impose immediate sanctions on those with non-compliant behavior.

WHEN: 3:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 1, 2007

WHERE: County Administration Center Board Chambers, Room 310
1600 Pacific Highway
San Diego, CA 92101

WHO: Forty-five youths are eligible to be recognized at the graduation ceremony. Some youths and their parents may be willing to provide interviews. Maria Reyes, portrayed in the movie "Freedom Writers;" Geni Cavitt, weather forecaster from 10 News, KGTV; and County officials from San Diego County Superior Court/Juvenile Division; Probation Department, Health and Human Services Agency, the District Attorney's office, Public Defender's office and Mental Health Systems, Inc.

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